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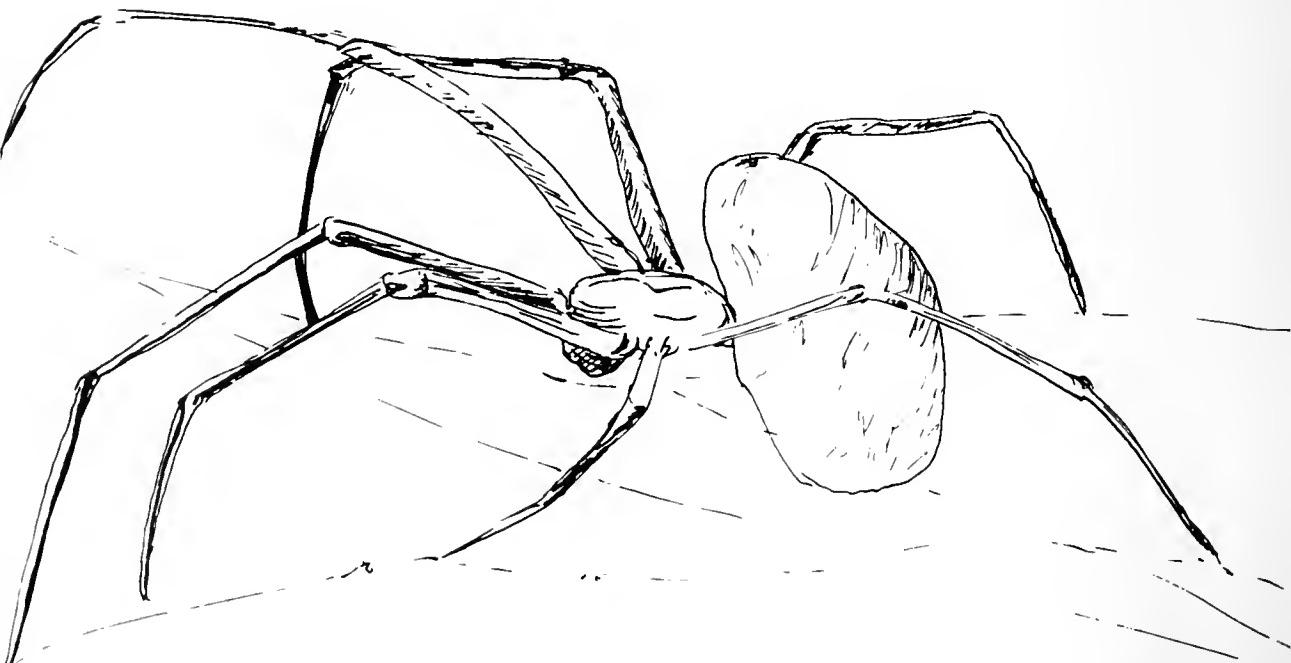
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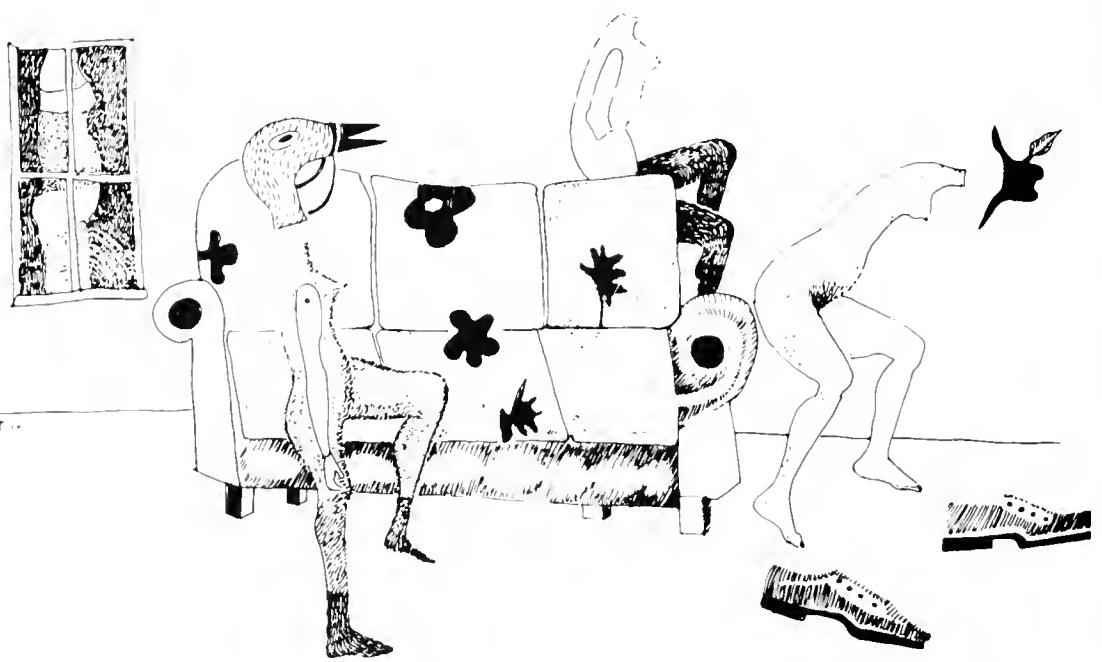
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**George and Harry View
Pictures in a Room**

from "Rooms"—drawings by
Joan Gardner

The senses deform
the mind forms—Braque

Harry, Harry, I see nothing but stripes
shoes walking without feet
hats floating without heads
am I blind Harry?

Relax, George, it's only your eye
that sees with a soft spot
in its center

Harry, Harry, I think the girl is—
a girl
but a duck head floats
where her head should be
mother goose on stilts

Well, George, you want to think it's a girl

Harry, The shape resembles the shape of a girl
but I'm hung up on a hanger, Harry
don't let the straps fall in a heap
the head resembles a box
or a blockhead
can I stretch my lips that far?
she needs a square hat, Harry.

George, your arms can take any shape
they want—
unhinged

the flowers' stems are growing
from inside the couch, Harry
it makes no sense

George, you can never see roots
only the flowers bleeding all over
themselves

where she touched
flowers don't make any sense

well, I tell you, I'd rather have
walrus teeth
polished to mystical perfection
in the palm of my hand
or a giraffe crack his neck
down the back
of the drain.

— *M. Marcuss Oslander*

Lines from a Plucked Sea Gull

3.

o love
the wave of your leaving
heaves cold as granite
wall of gull's wings
up from a catch
at dawn

7.

In sun magic
fog burns its outside
self
in
the lines of sand and sky
divisions in space
become solid
the face of the sea
like death
grins open
pressing its lips
to my breast

— *M. Marcuss Oslander*

Seasonal

To be at ease with a name like “Iris Origo.”
To have hair you can sweep up. And up.
To consult gardeners on the gatherings of flowers.
To feel the Italian “R” roll naturally off your tongue.
To write, not lines, but poems.
To console. To observe the Hours.
To have dared earlier, or chosen later,
Or to love the way you would have loved,
Had you known.

Or, finally,
Even to learn how to inhabit singular rooms,
Rooms entirely papered in tracings of green leaves,
Or in a small blue design that is pleasurable,
With one good pen-and-wash of a girl’s head,
Or one suggestion of a meadow,
And there to have the intentness
Not to think things through to an end.

That would be another life.

— *Penelope Laurans*

Old Friend

Vision of a stream,
Shallow,
Single rock,
Wet,
And long time
Resting.
Lost amidst the universe,
He has many friends,
No dreams
To be true,
No words to be silenced.
Cool
water
rushing
down.

Let
it
be
true,
I once knew you
Amidst the rocks,
The water,
And the silenced dreams.

—James C. Cox

— George Stewart Eidel

Sea Lines



Arizona Slim

Threadbare, cold, and all alone.
No planned destiny,
and no planned home.
Long time riding,
separated from locomotives and mass metropolis.
Gone to the desert cactus,
gone to roam.
Slim cried last night
beneath a silvery moon,
and his tears turned into gold dust.
A hard rain fell to the earth this morning,
the desert sands turned into cement,
and the lonesome cowboy sat there,
and rolled his last cigarette.

— *James C. Cox*

Virgin Women

Ancient, fragile works of art
preserved in glass cases and on display
for all to admire and respect.
Splotches of dried acrylic
peeling away from yellowed canvas backgrounds.
Splashes of runny water colors
faded from the scintillating rays of a cold December sun.
Words partially erased and blurred from the mixture
of moisture and ink yet still decipherable.
Unforgotten are the virgin women cast in plaster
and even some in marble
the women unlike the aging artwork.
Forever they will be remembered as they were depicted
young and untouched by nature.

— Michele Klotzer

Grandma

alone
caressing the bed sheet between age-spotted hands
frail and weak
unaware of the passing time
gums
but the smile has not changed
lonely
without even realizing it
mumbling
about youth and something none of us know
forgetting—questioning—repeating
unable to comprehend
her eyes pleading for an explanation
unsure of what she wants explained
she just smiles.

— *Michele Klotzer*

— George Stewart Eidel

Self-Portrait



Stunned

(For Dick Banks)

He was going to write a poem about
red apples rolling in the snow.
Each time we met he brought me bright
crimson in the roundness of his warm eyes.

He was full of poems—a dancing
harvest of delicious lines.
Now listen to this, he'd say
and fling out a vivid “someday”
that never found its white paper
but rolled in red delight
smooth and ripe for me to taste
in divided time.

November twenty-eighth was past harvest
but not quite December, the logical
time for ending.
Past harvest. Not yet snow.
I hoard my stunned apples
and wait.

— Alyce Roumanis

Mosaic Time

I don't know what the clock says—
It doesn't have a face.
I lost a day named Monday
And I'm floating in its space.

Tell me where the warm went—
I'm in a time of cold.
An impish ambiguity steals
The simple things I'm told.

The boat I sail has wheels,
It's bolting like a train.
I forgot the town the station's in,
. . . the runway lost the plane.

Traveling on an empty star
I find no place to hide.
My soul's packed in the suitcase
And the travel agent lied.

When I embarked, I disembarked.
They stole my destination.
The ticket melted in my hand
And I can't call information.

— *Alyce Roumanis*

March of Man

I stuck a Marlboro between my wind-chapped lips, flicked open my lighter, and lit "that damn weed" as my old lady calls it. I took a deep drag. The minister or priest, whatever, was finishing up some lousy prayer, probably made up in some old shack in Rome. I took another drag off the cigarette, then dropped an ash into my lap. I didn't bother to wipe it off.

I could see my old man's face behind the preacher. Somebody had laid a flower across his chest. Aunt Martha, off to my left, started a whole new batch of whining and tear jerking. I reached into my pocket and tossed her a hanky. My old lady started running over, too, which set off all the women around. I scrutinized their red, twisted faces. All in agony as real as if hell was upon them. I looked at the men. They looked uncomfortable, itching to follow my example and light up, but short of my toughness.

I got my toughness from my old man, the gray-faced guy lying in the shiny brown casket. He taught me real good that life is a bitch and bitchy things happened in it. We had been close, real close, and I'd made him a promise not to even wink at his funeral. Me and my old man, two tough old birds my Uncle Josey used to say. I'd swell up with pride when he said it and punch my pop's arm, getting one back that would send me sprawling, but loving every minute of it. He'd come over, throw me back on my feet, then start a slap-boxing fight that'd end with my nose running red.

I made the cigarette glow bright red as I puffed on it. Another ash in the lap.

"Shit." My old lady cried harder. Aunt Martha got up and ran from the room. They thought, as women will, that I swore because I missed my old man. Typical. The preacher shut up and headed for the door.

"Shit." It just slipped out. I wasn't sure why. Everybody started hugging and crying and leaving. Pretty soon we were all alone, me and my old man.

"I'm sorry, sir, but we are going to close now. If you wish you may see the deceased again tomorrow from seven to eleven."

One of those sneaky parlor bastards had crept into the room. I lit into him good, telling him in a variety of four-letter

words where he could place his seven-to-eleven. He left, his eyes a couple of inches bigger, his face as red as the rose on my pop's chest.

I walked up to the casket. I looked down at the dead face of the man who had taught me how to be a man.

"C'mon, old man," I shouted. "Let's do a little slap boxing. I danced around, weaving in and out like Muhammad Ali. I remembered the past few years, my old man's reflexes slowing down. I started faking slowness, but I think he caught on because he tried to nail me good one time. I acted on reflex and pegged. He fell backwards, just like I had when I was a kid. He had laughed and patted me on the shoulders.

I stopped acting like a fool, dropped my cigarette into the worn carpet, and squashed out its glow. I brought out my pack and put another slightly bent cigarette between my lips, not bothering to light it.

"Well, gotta go now, pops." My voice seemed to take on the trembling pitch of a just scolded kid. I breathed deep, then strode up to the casket. I took the rose from his chest and replaced it with the pack of Marlboros.

"Like to like," I muttered, then left, a mist forming before my vision. Probably an allergy to the rose. I tossed the rose into an ashtray on my way out, but it didn't help.

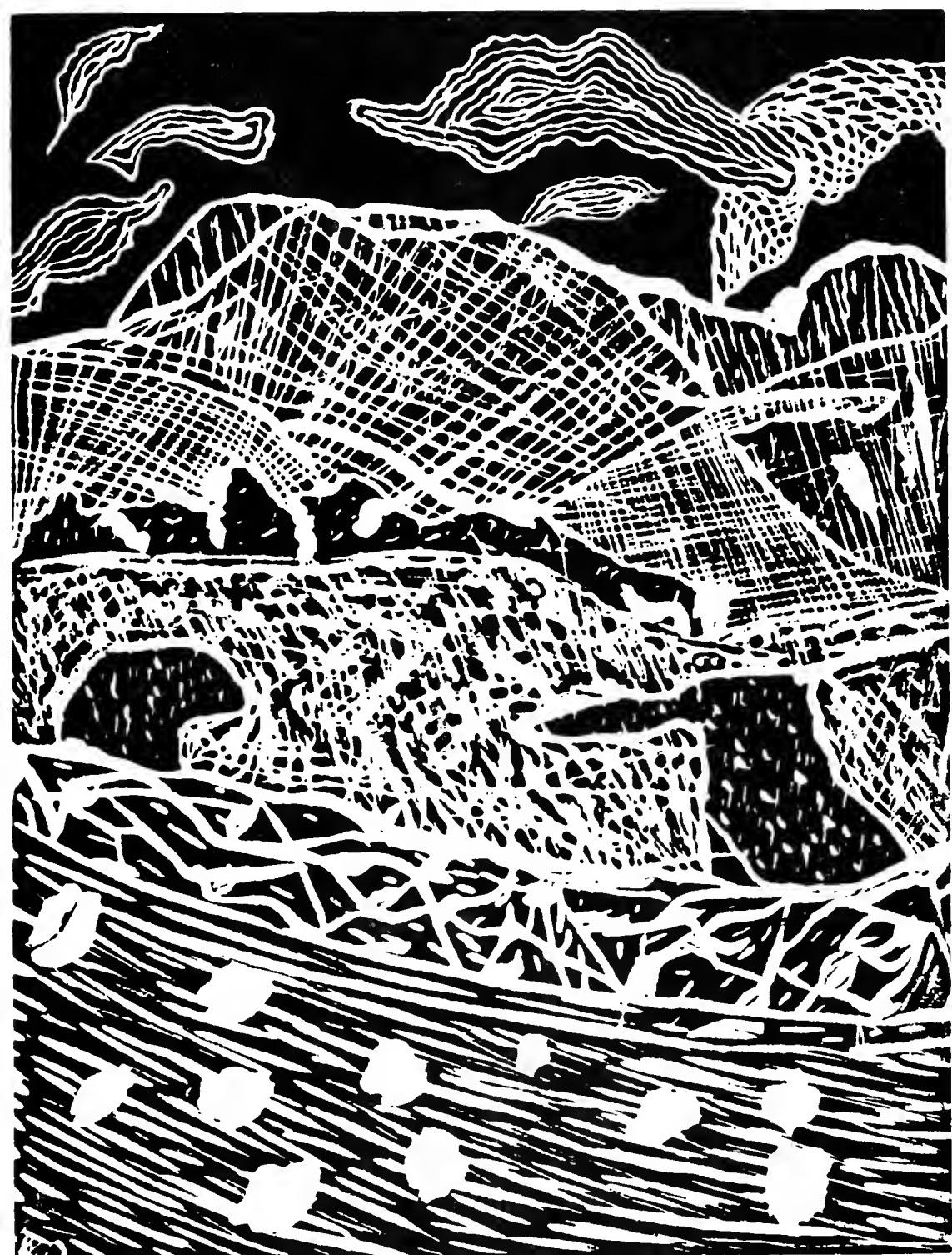
— *Bill Potter*

Thieves

concealed within its own shadow
the night comes like a thief
lurking around the back corner
of the lobster shed, crawling
under the rotted bow of an old boat
it sneaks along the side alley
slithering between velvet blades of grass
never making a sound, stealing
over the land plucking topaz jewels
from every crack and crevice
until the earth seems to disappear
in the quiet darkness like a stone
tossed into a vast canyon

someone lights a moon candle
an iridescent sliver of silver
moving in a slow, deliberate path
skimming the black lacquered water
sliding past slick rocks
up onto the wet sand, searching
through tall marsh reeds
where fiddler crabs burrow
in the soft mud, and crickets chant
to a distant star

— Karen Kmetzo



Keswick

—Cynthia Kazmirsky

Incubus

i was the youngest
i remember
when you stopped me
on the cellar
stair
jumping from phantom
shadows
like a jack-in-the-box
eyes smoldering
like cannel coal
a touch
cold and unkind
as a stranger ~
pricking my skin
engraving the tattoo
deep
to the bone

— Karen Kmetzo

Irresolution

A dull roaring pulses through the night
As of a distant train or a beast or the stars
About to descend, epiphany from mist.
Old friends' advice was "sleep on it," this lump
That pierces through a hundred mattresses.
Let me choose exile in my native land,
Stitch cold blue tears into a time-worn quilt,
Comfort your dreams in the hollow of my arms,
And wake to find decision on the pillow sleeve—
Without this roar that raps my inner ear.

— *Martha Ravits*

Manic Depression

A puppet without strings
dances madly
on the kitchen table with eyes
closed and fingers in his ears,
sometimes producing gurgles
and poking himself
with a pin or dull knife,
and maybe sneaking a
moldy apricot to balance
on his head, while a
muffled scream can be
heard in the attic.

— *Melissa Ritchey*

Love Gone to Sea

He brought me red roses and jade,
together on a silver pane of glass
 and flowers of pink or purple,
with long green stems that crawled
 up the mast and choked the sails.
 Golden bells summoned softly,
drawing him to dream in soothing green.
 A sea captain without a ship,
haunts his watery grave.

— *Melissa Ritchey*

Time

Time shoves you in a tenement, brandishes a blade, and steals your smile.

Time extols the virtues of eastern civilizations, mysticism, and meditation.

Time instructs you to sit quietly and relive the past while the future unbuckles its belt and beats you.

Time is ingestion and elimination—it is a full course meal that leaves you empty.

Time is an angel with burning wings.

Time is a conundrum that seats you at a piano and robs you of your rhythm.

Time is a beautiful messenger who sojourns briefly and escapes surreptitiously.

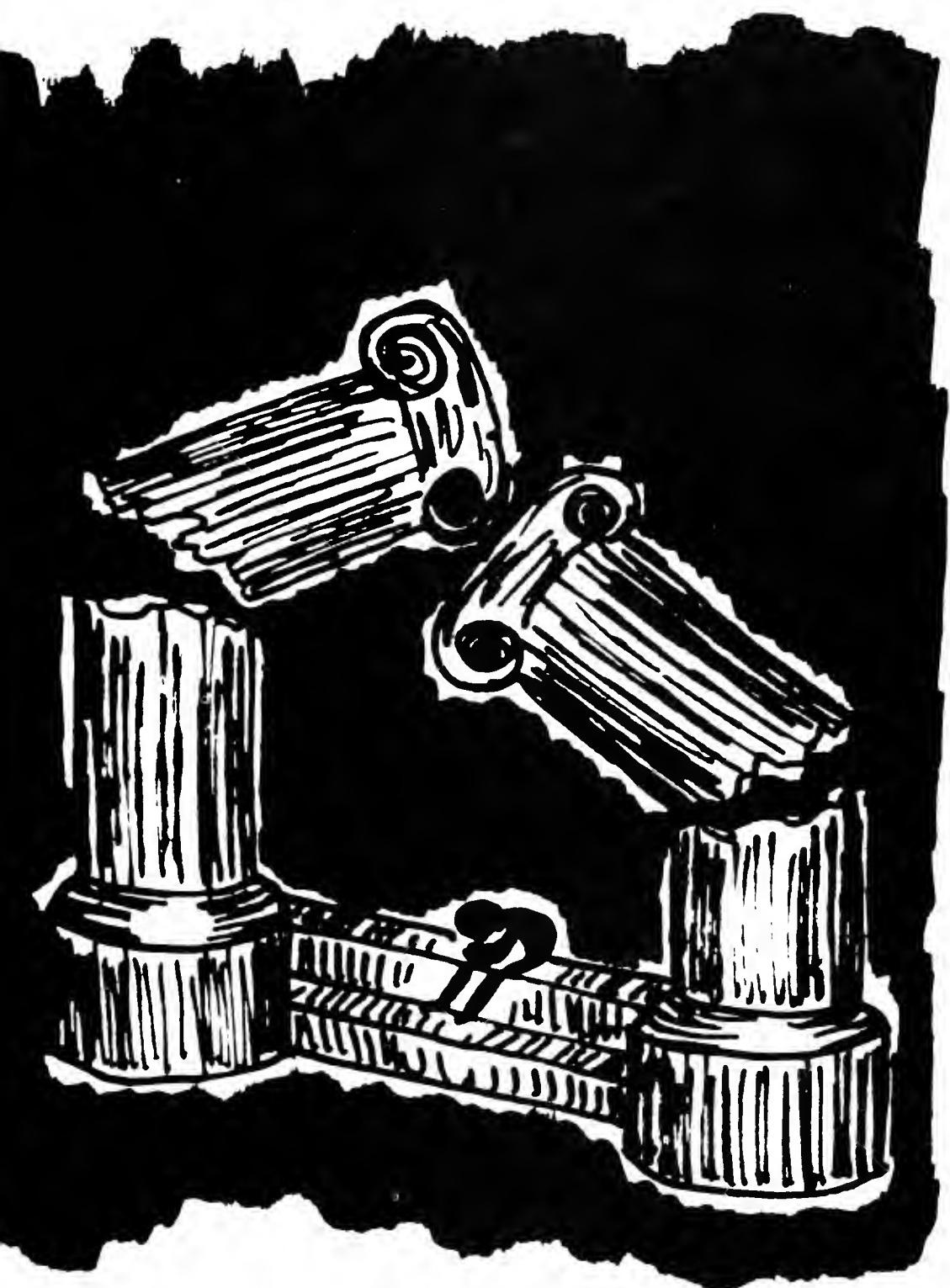
Time unplugs the clock and leaves you wondering.

Time is a funeral parlor that tells you the time.

Time is a god who nurtures the womb.

Time is a madman who seals the tomb.

— *Thomas Brennan Ward*



—Pamela Ann Pease

Icarus Falls

O my Father,
 you have weighted me down with wings,
 settled my soul to plod the middle air.
Keep from the sun for safety's sake,
 you say,
And in the name of caution, from the sea.
 The middle air is crystal, meaningless,
 Pale milky blue, flat as an old man's eye.
 I defy you.
I dare the sun with wings invisible.
 Love burns away complacency;
 The wax grows warm,
 the feathers flurry down
 petals
 from the glory of my being.
 The wings I wear are mine.
Freedom
 is a naked, evil lover.
 I rise in flight to meet the hungry sea.

— Esther M. Friesner

Suetonius I

(In memory of the two gladiators of noble rank who, during the reign of Julius Caesar and for no financial, political, or personal reason, fought a combat to the death.)

What must we prove?
Equals in rank, must death decide
 the better man
when money fails?
 Our names will stand.
Here at the mortal edge
 we ask for the unasked.
 Oh, most trivial of deaths,
 done for a whim!
What do the gladiators think who face the final adversary daily?
 Caritas, my brothers!
They should approve and bless us.
Sand is a hard and ultimate exchange
 for the couch of rose and lilies.
 Blood entwines the laurels.
Reason dreams,
 letting the cause of death be well forgotten.
 Dare we retreat?
Scorn is no worse than the long-drawn dying.
Bring me the sword.
 Hail, Caesar.

— *Esther M. Friesner*

No Future in It

1.

Eating Breakfast

In the end, the truth never satisfies.
Concentration at the stove produces
Spanish omelette: half a dozen eggs,
some thin green pepper, onions cleaned
and sliced. Even were you here,
perching across the table on that chair
with the driftily rung, you'd let your tea
get cold. We'd talk, I'd heap the eggs
on two blue plates, you'd pick and pick.
Later, when you'd left, I'd scrape
your plate and go out back to find the dogs.

2.

At the Movies

You're right, we'd look too awkward
side by side in a brown photograph,
startled, as if trying to explain
precisely our old clothes, and why
there was nothing in our hands:

like when all the cowboys mount
their horses and ride out of town,
the lights come up, and people catch
each other's eyes for the first time
in two hours, without words.

— R. F. Yeager

— Nancy Raver



Slow-Pitch Softball Game

1.

A lot of grown men lumbering about
on a day too hot to move:
the wind stalled beyond the elms,
the dust, and the brown shaggy grass.
Who the hell knows? Gloved hands
slap at mosquitoes. Birds veer to the south.

2.

There are no women here, although
some sit, high up on the hill and scream
as if into jars. Their husbands, their lovers
wait crouched in Missouri
for something to drop from the sky
and rest in their palms like a cloud.
The women imagine December in braille:
a collar of fur, a cold hand. This urgency
passes. It rains on the trailer. The turnips
get yellow and split like dry teeth.

3.

So much superstition here, the old men
need it. Caps just so. The unwashed pair
of faded pants. One always rolls his sleeves,
spits twice, and squints like a knife.
It's summer: The warmed blood pretends.
In winter a patch of fine mold
spreads on the root-cellар wall, red ice
clots the pipes. A grounder rolls out
for a triple. In a thin, queer wind
the leaves shift. Stiff tendons. Dark snow.

4.

They do not startle each other. Forgiveness comes easier now, a bribe for the bones.

They ask less. They curse like a kiss in a mirror. The night is fierce enough, a dull hum of cicadas behind the still house, the gurgle of water that leaks from a hose.

— *R. F. Yeager*

No Second Fiddle

There never was a question
Of playing second fiddle.
If you were Fiddle
I'd be Banjo,
Even if it killed me.

Nor was I inclined
To play Dulcinea
To your Quixote.
And that was wise.

For I have noticed,
That in the garden
Of your dreams,
I am included
Among the statuary.

— *Elia V. Chepaitis*

St. Jerome in Connecticut

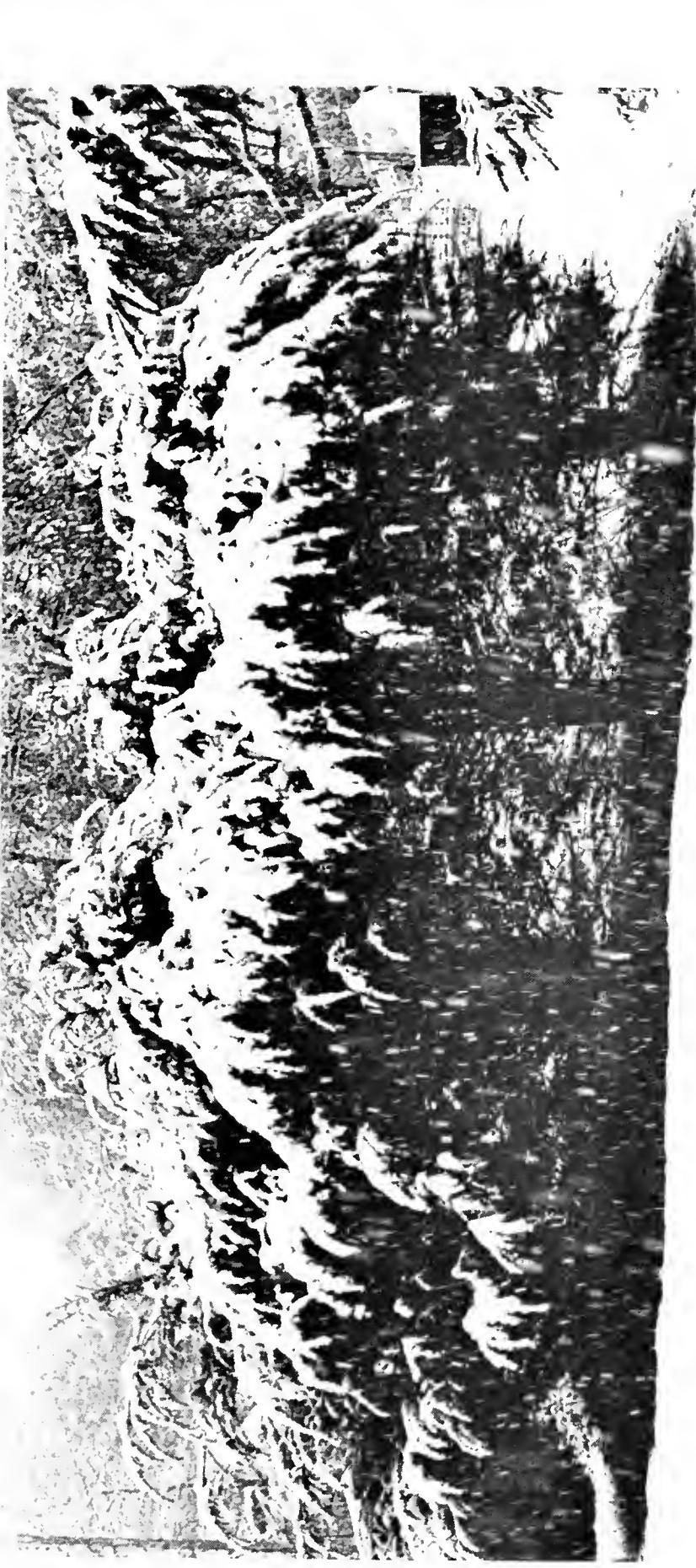
The dishes are done, the news is over.
She reads in the next room, though she looks up
As I walk past on my way to the study.

I have set it up well: the mantis lamp
Crouches over my books, an image of action
Arrested, coiled, held to a single interest,

Oblivious to the signs on the wall, the other books,
Beast come down to feed on the page that fills,
Alone in the company of quiet. I turn off lights

That block my way. She loses sight of me
And back sinks her reflection in the word pool.
I have only to close the door and immerse myself, too . . .
Lion and liege, together in the cage of winter.

— *Charles S. Berger*



—Nancy Raver

What She Said before Leaving

We moved around the midwest
from Mobridge to Lenexa.
Blame International Harvester or
John Deere, maybe: or just my father.
Machines and their men. . . .

Every other year, a new rootless
tacktown on the flat heartland.
I felt at home in the center,
knowing it could never hold
my prints, nor a mother's touch:

"Will you still be here when I get back?"
"And where did we find you today?"

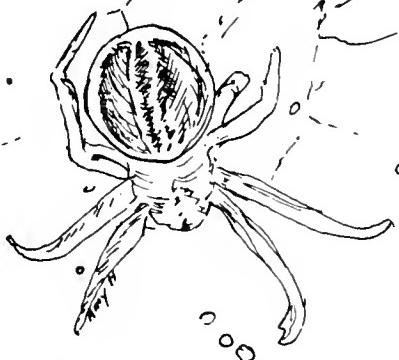
So unlike *you*: fixed to the edge,
harbored on your island-borough—
you wandered charted streets,
back in time for dinner
and promise of the pillow to come.

So now imagination finds you
standing up asleep
near the house where you were born.

When it comes to me I'll be moving on,
hitching through Yugoslavia
or any nonrelated country:

in a nameless precinct,
core-riven by desire.

— Charles S. Berger



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A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood
isolated, —
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast
surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament,
out of itself
Ever unweeling them, ever tirelessly speeding
them.
And you O my soul where you stand;
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans
of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking
the spheres to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the
ductile anchor hold,
Till the grommet thread you fling catch
somewhere. O my soul.

Walt Whitman